

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

June 17, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

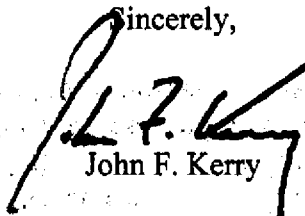
As the Federal Communications Commission considers the compensation rate for Video Relay Service (VRS) providers, I write to stress the value of this service to the deaf community. As you know, just as the non-deaf community uses telephones to connect with people across distances, VRS allows citizens who are deaf to communicate in American Sign Language with people around the world.

Through a video feed with a middle-man interpreter translating the conversation by phone to the destination party, and vice versa, VRS serves an indispensable purpose by providing the capability for deaf people to call and receive calls from friends, family, co-workers, and emergency services. Additionally, Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires the FCC to promote efficiency, technology, access, and functional equivalence for the deaf. VRS is an incredibly effective means toward those ends, and today, over 100,000 deaf Americans rely on this service in their daily lives.

For these reasons, it is essential that a fair and reasonable compensation rate be established for service providers. I understand that the current rate expires July 1 of this year, and the National Exchange Carrier Association has recommended significant rate cuts for the larger VRS providers. Some are concerned that the proposed rate may not cover the actual costs of providing a quality VRS connection, and as a result may lead to reduced service options and longer wait times for users. As you consider public comments on this issue and seek to combat fraudulent claims in the VRS industry, I urge you to adopt a VRS rate that appropriately meets the needs of the deaf community.

Thank you for your continued careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,


John F. Kerry

24 JUN 2010 PCUD

Handwritten notes:
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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

August 5, 2010

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Unites States Senate
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kerry

Thank you for your letter regarding the reimbursement rate for Video Relay Service (VRS). I share your support for VRS, which has become a critical communications tool for many who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On June 28, 2010, the Commission unanimously adopted two items to address immediate and long-term approaches for sustaining the vital Telecommunications Relay Services, of which VRS is one form. In an *Order*, the Commission sets interim VRS rates for the July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 period at \$6.2390 for Tier I, \$6.2335 for Tier II, and \$5.0668 for Tier III. These rates represent the average of the current tiered rates and NECA's proposed rates based on actual, historical costs. The *Order* notes that these rates also reflect a balance between the goal of ensuring that VRS providers recover from the VRS Fund only the reasonable costs caused by their provision of VRS and the goal of ensuring quality and sufficient service during a one-year period.

The other item adopted on June 28 is a *Notice of Inquiry* to take a fresh look at the VRS rules with an eye to ensuring that this vital program remains effective, efficient, and sustainable in the future. The *Notice* poses questions that delve into many cost and reimbursement related issues, seeking to make the program less susceptible to the waste, fraud, and abuse that have plagued the current program. Bringing clarity and predictability to VRS compensation is high on the Commission's list of priorities, and we will resolve this proceeding as expeditiously as possible. I am enclosing a copy of the Commission's News Release for your information.

I appreciate your continuing interest in this very important matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski